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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN FATA AND NWFP

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Separate assessment visits to Lower Dir by post,s Refugee Affairs Specialist in early August and late September show the Government of Pakistan (GOP) has the current situation moderately under control, and current efforts seem more organized than in the past. Overcrowding in camps, water, hygiene and sanitation, however, remain serious issues. Although many IDPs returned to their villages in Bajaur agency in early September, a significantly larger number moved out again to safer districts following renewed fighting later that month. Estimates from UNHCR and local government officials as of early October are that about 168,000 people are currently displaced. Of this number approximately 30,000 are living in camps; the rest are housed with host families. The challenges at the moment include improving camp management, distributing aid to IDPs housed with families, and planning ahead for the winter. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) Severe flooding in NWFP in early August affected more than 200,000 people by crippling infrastructure and destroying or damaging agriculture and livestock. In the same month, military action against militants in Bajaur and Swat displaced more than 300,000 people.

¶3. (SBU) The GOP announced a ceasefire to coincide with Ramadan in early September; many IDPs returned to their villages and most of the IDPs camps were then closed. However, military operations continued. This renewed fighting forced the IDPs to return to safer districts in Lower Dir, Charsadda, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Karachi.

CURRENT SITUATION

¶4. (SBU) An average of 100 families, or about 800-900 individuals flee from the affected areas daily. The situation is in flux - many of the displaced, especially the men, move back and forth, as the security situation allows, to protect their property, livestock, and/or engage the fighting. Approximately 80 percent of those outside Bajaur are women and children.

¶5. (SBU) Despite GOP officials, claims that 300,000 IDPs fled Bajaur and SWAT, the UN Resident Coordinator,s office reports 168,463 people (23,887 families) have been displaced due to the military operation in Bajaur and Swat. Of this number, 30,069 individuals (3,936 families) are reportedly living in 12 GOP designated camps in six districts, while the rest are staying with host families or in rented homes. The

Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are working together to establish Welfare Centers at the district level to register IDPs staying with host families. UNHCR and CAR have a near-term plan to reduce the burden on the host families, by distributing relief items from the registration centers and validating the refugee information on a monthly basis.

¶16. (SBU) Of the 12 GOP designated camps, four are located in Lower Dir at Degree College Timergara, Regional Institute for Training, Khungi, Samar Bagh, and Sadbar Kalay with a total population of 14,664 people (1,588 families). CAR authorities work closely with Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to manage these camps.

¶17. (SBU) The estimated camp housing statistics as of the end of the Eid holiday (Oct. 3) are: Charsadda camp at Paloso houses 590 families (4,067 individuals); Mardan camp at Shiekh Yaseen Town houses 502 families (3,341 individuals), Nowshera camp at Banzir Complex houses 405 families (2,658 individuals), and Peshawar camp at Kacha Garhi houses 751 families (4,489 individuals). The GOP shifted 100 families from Charsadda Poloso camp to Kacha Garhi camp in Peshawar to reduce overcrowding. The GOP is also planning to gradually close the Shiekh Yaseen (Mardan Town) camp due to disagreements over land ownership; authorities would relocate this camp's IDPs to Kacha Garhi and Jalozai. Those displaced from the Frontier Region (FR) Kohat area due to inter-tribal fighting are staying with host families; as a contingency, however, a camp has also been established at

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Kohat Sports Stadium.

CAMP MANAGEMENT

¶18. (SBU) The provincial government appears better able to handle IDP issues now than it did in August. The provincial government has assigned the overall responsibility for camp management to the CAR. Many, including UNHCR and ICRC reps, feel the CAR's 28 years of experience managing Afghan refugee camps will improve IDP camp management.

¶19. (SBU) Various NGOs and IOs administer these camps and they operate under CAR and district government supervision. District government handles legal and protection issues and coordinates warehousing and distribution of supplies and selection of camp sites; the CAR registers IDPs in the camps and supervises distribution of supplies and other services.

¶110. (SBU) Because of the continuous flow back and forth from the conflict zones, UNHCR and District government officials have been discussing appointing camps in Dir, Swat, Charsadda and Mardan as so-called "transit camps", and those at Nowshera and Peshawar as "designated" camps. Transit camps would receive IDPs and offer them a brief stay; IDPs would then either relocate to a designated camp or return to their villages.

¶111. (SBU) Camp conditions, including hygiene and sanitation, remain substandard. There are not enough latrines; diarrhea is a common problem, and response efforts are inadequate to date. An average of only 5-6 liters of water per person is available in camps. Children have been vaccinated against measles in only a handful of camps. There are no reports of cholera.

¶112. (SBU) UNHCR is working with provincial governments to address these conditions. Many of the problems can be attributed to overcrowding. The GOP, in collaboration with other humanitarian agencies, is actively looking for additional camp sites. While many landowners were initially not averse to the temporary presence of IDPs, as the situation drags on, they are insisting that their land be

returned. Authorities have re-opened the former Afghan refugees, camp at Kacha Gari for IDPs; the GOP is considering establishing two more camps in Jalozai and Shamshatoo.

¶13. (SBU) According to the UN Resident Coordinator office, an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Contingency Plan has also been drafted for the NWFP in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and provincial and district authorities. The plan will identify the needs and issues to measure planning and quality of response.

¶14. (SBU) So far, there have not been any serious security issues in the camps. We are told levies and khassadars (local level law enforcement entities) are present some of the time in the camps. A more consistent and coherent security presence is needed to assist camp managers in maintaining order, and prevent non-IDPs from entering and disrupting camps.

¶15. (SBU) The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has declared security zones within NWFP. Humanitarian agencies can go to zone 1 (Peshawar and adjacent areas) and zone 2 (Charsadda, Mardan and Nowshera), while they cannot go to zone 3 (Dir and Swat).

SITUATION IN SWAT VALLEY

¶16. (SBU) Military operations continue in Swat as well, and relief organizations and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) officials are deeply concerned about the population. Four camps have been established in local government institutions in the SWAT district, but they only house about 850 people (100 families). ICRC told Embassy that the situation has not gotten as much attention mostly because the displaced are moving around within the district and are not turning up in other jurisdictions. ICRC has had intermittent access, but the security situation has significantly limited their ability to work.

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FORWARD PLANNING

¶17. (SBU) Both UNHCR and ICRC tell us they are expecting the IDP situation to continue through the winter. Fighting in Bajaur and Swat has not abated, and there has been talk of another campaign in Mohmand agency. UNHCR is advising the GOP on options for winterizing shelters.

¶18. (SBU) Because it expects this will be a protracted displacement, UNHCR is advising the GOP to begin organizing livelihoods programs for IDPs. WFP apparently has a social targeting approach it is interested in deploying, which would identify those areas most in need of cash for work and other similar programs. UNHCR supports this approach, cautioning that providing uncoordinated programs in various areas could exacerbate the problem by creating "aid magnets" in areas in which there is not serious need.

COMMENT

¶19. (U) The current situation, as compared to August, is better. Proper land acquisition for establishment of camps and winterization of tents are likely the biggest challenges ahead for the humanitarian agencies and the GOP. Distribution of Water, medicines, hygiene and sanitation, and lack of coordination still remain serious problems. For the moment, aid agencies appear to have enough resources; the issues are access, organization, and management. Mission will continue to monitor the situation.

PATTERSON